

PROGRAM REVIEW AT PRAIRIE STATE COLLEGE

When the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) announced its intention to evaluate and update its Program Review System, Prairie State College (PSC) responded with a serious examination of its own program review process. The existing program review process had been coordinated with the ICCB's 5-year review cycle. Over the course of a year a team of academic administrators and program coordinators developed a new process for thinking about factors that contribute to the health of a program or discipline. Key indicators of success were identified, relevant data elements defined, and a continuum established that would indicate a program's level of health or vulnerability. As a result of this process, we now have a rigorous annual review of every discipline and career and technical program. This comprehensive review relies not only on traditional data elements, but also on analytical and reflective input from faculty. It incorporates the results of assessment of student learning outcomes. This review was piloted in 2005-2006, and fully implemented for the first time for the academic year, 2006-2007.

At the end of every fall semester, chairs and program coordinators are provided with current institutional data such as enrollment, retention, and graduation data by academic program or discipline. They also receive labor market information, and other materials related to their programs. Career programs receive results of the annual Occupational Follow-Up Study which is administered to all students who complete our career degrees and certificates. Institutional data usually covers at least three years. These materials provide a solid foundation for review, in-depth analysis and recommendations. Additional materials supplied for each area include ICCB reference materials such as the Course Master and Curriculum Master lists, copies of the previous Program Review for each area, copies of all Official Course Outlines in the area, copies of print materials related to each program, and matrices that summarize key indicators and data elements for determining program health.

Faculty chairs and coordinators work informally with their respective academic deans throughout the Spring semester to review and analyze all aspects of their programs. In late March, program coordinators make a formal presentation of their findings to the full group of academic administrators, which consists of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, all of the academic deans, and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment. This group critiques the information presented, raises questions of substance, and calls attention to omissions or aspects of the review that need to be strengthened. Formal written reports are submitted in late April. Formal reports on assessment of student outcomes are submitted in June. Finally, during the summer, the academic administrators meet to consider the Assessment reports, and feedback from this collaborative review is provided to faculty by their respective deans at the start of the Fall semester. As our annual program review process continues, these reports will provide an increasingly rich collection of data, analysis and reflection.